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Editor:

I would like to respond to the multiple articles that appeared in the Journal this past February regarding the benefits of membership and exhorting those not members to join the CCA.

As a profession we have lost grounds in practice rights since the beginning of my political involvement in 1983. We are appearing in the minority of states in several areas - clinical lab procedures (including urinalysis!?), doppler studies and botanical therapies. These losses directly affect our scope as practiced in the individual offices.

I well remember the obstetrics/gynecology fiasco in which we lost more practice rights. I was present at a meeting of the Verdugo Hills Chiropractic Society at which Mr. Cuneo explained that we would sacrifice ob/gyn (and our colleague, Dr. Flores) to retain other rights. Such a wise move, that's why we're still in court over practice rights!

It appears that the CCA has taken a course to relegate us to being back/neck technicians. I do not care to see another study about back or neck pain. What about the effect of chiropractic on internal disorders, pediatric care, etc? Why are not our limited research dollars being spent on research that will expand the profession rather than channel it into a back/neck pain specialty?

CCA's lackadaisical response to other professions intruding into the area of chiropractic adjusting is unexcusable. Why hasn't the CCA filed suit against the intruders. Could it be that the CCA is afraid of the almighty M.D. and R.P.T.?

When I see the CCA change its' direction to that supporting a full scope of practice, the beat and broadest in the country, and prevent intrusions into our profession by others, I'll be the first in line with my membership dues.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian A. Smith

## Back Pain Specialists? What The Data Shows

By **Paul H. Lehman**  
Director of Public Affairs



**T**he *California Chiropractic Journal* received a letter recently from a chiropractic doctor in Los Angeles who felt compelled to respond to our February issue's pitch for him to join CCA. The doctor's grievance boiled down to a contention that since he began watching in 1983, CCA "has taken a course to relegate us to back and neck pain technicians."

From a patient practice and marketing perspective, I'd like to respond to this doctor's assertions and share some data that might surprise him a bit.

Rather than having diminished the scope of practice, a case can be made that CCA has solidified and expanded the patient market for chiropractic doctors in California.

In a highly competitive economic market, survivors will prevail in one of several ways. If they have a dominant share of the market and can outlast the competition, they are protected. If they have an outstanding and/or unique product or service that is in demand, they will survive as long as they protect and maintain their unique position.

Clearly chiropractic health care is not in a dominant position from which to dictate to the health care market. Organized medicine maintains that position assiduously, sometimes to the detriment of chiropractic doctors, psychologists, licensed nurse practitioners and many other non-MD professions.

Studies of patients nationwide and in California suggest that consumers perceive chiropractic doctors as always having been uniquely qualified and effective for treatment of back and neck problems. Here is the existing source of strength to maintain and expand current market share and from which to carve out new markets.

Surveys done by the American Chiropractic Association since 1980 show a steady increase, nationwide, in the percent-

age of patients seen for "neuro-musculoskeletal" conditions, while declines have occurred each year in treatment for "viscerosomatic" and "vascular-related" conditions.

For example in 1980, 79 percent of patients sought a DC for neuro-musculoskeletal problems, 12.9 percent for viscerosomatic and 6.5 percent for vascular-related. The latest ACA figures for 1989 show that the neuro-musculoskeletal category has gone up to 87.7 percent while viscerosomatic and vascular-related have declined to 7.9 percent and 2.3 percent respectively.

While CCA and ACA have worked over the last decade to increase the scope of consumer attention to chiropractic health care, the public has repeatedly indicated that they want to see chiropractic doctors for neuro-musculoskeletal conditions ... or primarily, back, neck and extremities problems.

of approximately 10.8 million consumers who are either current or potential patients.

For what conditions did this rather substantial group of clients report they would most likely seek chiropractic help?

Neck or back pain (85 percent), stiff or sore neck (70 percent), muscle or joint pain (31 percent), sports/fitness (23 percent).

In other words, the chiropractic profession has a tremendous advantage in its unique identity with a sizeable segment of the population. To not take notice of this advantage and use it to expand the patient population would be irresponsible for the profession and would be non-responsive to consumer demands.

Many doctors I've spoken with report tremendous success in opening a new patient's awareness of the scope of chiropractic care. But this has occurred only after the patient presented with a back or

**"When the focus is the back, chiropractic doctors have already attained an enviable status among consumers."**

### California Survey

In December of 1988, CCA surveyed consumers across California to investigate attitudes and behaviors. The data was surprising. In very general terms, here are some highlights.

Consumers who indicated they had seen a chiropractic doctor in the last two years totalled 15 percent of all respondents. In California that means about 4.5 million people who can be considered current patients.

Also, a total of 36 percent of all respondents indicated that they "would likely visit a DC." That's an additional 21 percent above the current patients for a grand total

neck problem and was diagnosed and treated successfully. Many times these patients would never have considered coming to a chiropractic doctor for any other problems.

Results from a recent study in the *Western Journal of Medicine* (October, 1988) suggest that consumer dissatisfaction with medical diagnosis and treatment of back pain has led to increasing use of chiropractic care.

When both medical doctors and chiropractic doctors were asked to respond to the statement, "Most of my back pain patients

continued on page 18

**COMMUNICATIONS**, continued from page 15

are very satisfied with my care," 99 percent of DCs agreed with the statement, while only 55 percent of MDs agreed.

Another study carried in the *Western Journal of Medicine* (March, 1989) by medical researchers at an HMO in the State of Washington asked back pain patients directly to share their feelings about chiropractic doctors and medical doctors.

In this very interesting article the authors noted that 66 percent of the chiropractic patients reported they were "very satisfied" with their back pain care, while only 33 percent of the medical patients reported the same level of satisfaction.

When the focus is the back, chiropractic doctors have already attained an enviable status among consumers.

Consider the studies that have shown up to 70 percent of the adult population will have a significant back pain problem at some point in their lives. In California that means an enormous 21 million aching individuals seeking treatment.

Possibly the greatest danger to the profession is that if we are not diligent in protecting and strengthening it, chiropractic doctors might lose their excellent position and reputation as effective experts in back pain diagnosis and relief.

In that case, all of those 21 million aching consumers would go elsewhere. That would leave precious few patients for doctors to see for the panoply of other conditions

within the scope of chiropractic practice.

A significant segment of modern day consumers perceive chiropractic doctors as back experts and have a rather high level of comfort with their care in this area. These are people who will likely respond to suggestions that they visit a chiropractic office when they have a problem they perceive to be the domain of chiropractic care. These patients may then be relied upon to share their favorable experiences with their friends, relatives and co-workers.

We can take satisfaction in the actual growth of the chiropractic patient market in recent years. ACA survey data has shown a modest but steady growth over the last several decades in the percentage of the public using chiropractic care. CCA's ongoing consumer research in California will track the growth in our own regional market each year.

Maintaining a broad scope of chiropractic practice is an important function of the California Chiropractic Association. CCA is vigorously defending a broad scope for the benefit of many patients who are being helped in many ways by their chiropractic doctors.

At the same time the CCA must vigorously market chiropractic diagnosis and care in a tough consumer market which is getting tougher all the time. As the profession continues to emerge and solidify its position, consumer understanding and acceptance will grow beyond simple back

and neck pain diagnosis and relief.

We can visualize a time in the future when consumers and medical colleagues are actively seeking chiropractic care for a wide variety of conditions. Survival through strength in today's highly competitive health care market will put the chiropractic profession in a position to make that possible.

### What the *Los Angeles Times* said after they talked to CCA.

"...the increasingly active California Chiropractic Association ... chiropractors have been seeking, and getting, wider acceptance, in part through favorable court decisions and aggressive lobbying and public relations."

"...chiropractors already have gained a higher profile through increasingly aggressive lobbying and advertising campaigns..."

In newspapers around the state CCA is getting its members acceptance and recognition. We are elevating your status among consumers, at the state capitol, in the business/insurance sector and among your colleagues.

If you're not with us yet as a member, you're missing out on the "wider acceptance" the *Times* is announcing.

Join now by calling  
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June 7, 1990

Paul H. Lehman  
7801 Folsom Blvd. Suite 375  
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Dear Mr. Lehman,

I found your article "Back Pain Specialists? What The Data Shows" to be completely illustrative of my original contentions that the CCA has not supported a broad scope of practice. Instead it has opted for the course of least resistance, that of back and neck pain specialists. To wit:

Paragraph 3: it is a fact that the chiropractic scope of practice has been diminished and the CCA did not oppose these actions. It is therefore impossible to have "expanded the patient market" with a scope of practice that eliminates procedures such as venapuncture and certain groups of people such as women giving birth.

Paragraph 6: Chiropractic doctors were not "always" perceived by consumers to be back and neck specialists. In fact, a perusal of patient records of early 1900 chiropractors shows quite the opposite - patients with primary back and neck complaints were a rarity.

Paragraphs 7-9: The 1980 ACA study points up my contentions further. Due to the lack of appropriate public relations, chiropractic societies have influenced public perceptions by reinforcing the belief that we are back doctors. The public mimics what it is told!

As you mention, 4.5 million Californians are current patients. That is only 15%! I am interested in the 25.5 million, the other 85% that are not getting proper health care.

Chiropractic has been implicated in a multitude of conditions: middle ear infections, strep throat, sudden cardiac death syndrome, PMS to name a few. These examples are from our research journals within the past year. Where are the news releases concerning these findings? Where is the PR to promote this information? The public can only use what it is given to formulate an opinion.

As the major representative of the chiropractic profession in

California, the CCA has a duty and obligation to disseminate this information to the public. Anything less is treachery. This aggressive stance will turn heads, let it! We have enough ammunition to be on the offensive for a long time.

No thanks to "public perception" my practice has a wide variety of patients. I am the primary health care provider to many individuals with organic disease because I have demonstrated what I can do without drugs.

Our future doctors are not being taught the capabilities of chiropractic. One recent graduate tried to explain to me why chiropractors are not against the use of any drug! If she had any understanding of the theory of chiropractic, she would understand the drugless approach.

Chiropractors were the best educated healers in this country at one time. We must return to that higher level of education and seize the opportunity to wrestle the medical monopoly down. We do not have to appease the AMA, CMA or "public perception." We are pre-eminent in the health care system, now is the time to exploit this fact to the public's advantage.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian A. Smith

cc: Merlyn A. Green, D.C.